

INVESTIGATION OF THE ASSASSINATION
OF MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

HEARINGS
BEFORE THE
SELECT COMMITTEE ON ASSASSINATIONS
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It arrested a man finally, as to whom there is very substantial direct evidence that he was at least in the environs and had done a lot of things that seemed to be related to the possibility.

I enjoy admitting mistakes. I can't tell you that I am able to say that this was one. I believe that the judgment was right, that the FBI pursued this with keenest desire and made a prodigious effort, and without a lot of breaks that you often get, finally apprehended someone who pled guilty.

I regretted at the time, I regret still, that there was a plea of guilty. I thought history was entitled to more. Although I think an individual has a right to plead guilty if he chooses that the public can't deny to satisfy its concern for history.

I would like to see that trial happen. I would like for history to be more assured. But history is rarely assured about assassinations. There is something in us that finds some so horrible and unacceptable.

I think the FBI was probably the only available agency. To sit here now and think of the appearance of conflict of interest is to ignore some overwhelming facts: That it had the confidence of the vast majority of the people of the United States—that is my judgment—to a higher degree than it had mine, that it had the confidence of the President of the United States; that it had some 7,700 agents that were pretty darned good investigators.

We needed them in an emergency. We used them.

Chairman STOKES: Thank you very much.

I have no further questions.

At this time the Chair recognizes the gentleman from North Carolina, Mr. Preyer.

Mr. PREYER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

It is good to have you here today, Mr. Clark.

I wanted to clear up one point for the record which I may not have understood correctly in the first place.

You mentioned that when Robert Kennedy was Attorney General he had a habit of signing papers and you would find the papers stuffed in his pockets, or in drawers, in his desk. Is that right?

Mr. CLARK: Let me restate that and say that it is probably an unfair characterization. He was a bundle of energy and impatient with details. Filing wasn't one of his personal strengths.

My impression coming in later—and it was augmented by what I had seen—I had seen him walking around with paper sticking out of his pockets, you know, and they looked kind of crumpled.

But the characterization that I made was based upon coming in more than 2 years after he left office, and trying to reconstruct his methodology in approving wiretaps and bugs.

That became a fairly significant and essentially, I think, unrelated reason, that there was a controversy at the time between Mr. Hoover and Robert Kennedy as to who authorized all these bugs that had been placed on people that were allegedly involved in organized crime.

I felt an obligation to the Department and the former Attorney General and the Director to find out what I could about it.

We found copies of these things scattered hither and yon. I mean, as I recall, we found some in a desk that he had used. We found some in files where they would never have been found